THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DREAMS IN ~~THE RAMAYANA~~ ANCIENT INDIAN LITERATURE

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The dream is an important motif in ancient Sanskrit literature. It figures prominently in many a work where it is used as an indicator of coming events, good or bad. There had developed in the ancient period in India a regular science of dreams. There were ~~people~~ versed in interpreting them to whom people repaired for getting the meaning of them and having an idea of what they signified. This was necessary because many a time the events in dreams were indicated through symbols and not directly which needed to be related to them through proper interpretation. Hence the need of intermediaries. Sometimes the people could themselves interpret them on the basis of the traditional knowledge. They could also do so on the basis of their mental state after the dreams. If they felt uneasy, their mind and heart heavy, they took the dream to forebode some evil. If they felt happy and light, they took the dream to indicate something good.

The dream sequence occurs in the Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa twice, once in the case of Bharata and the other time in the case of Trijaṭā. After Daśaratha had died and his body placed in an oil container by ministers, messengers were despatched to Kekaya post haste to bring Bharata back to Ayodhyā to perform the obsequies of Daśaratha which in the absence of Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa he alone could perform and to assume the reins of office to avoid the kingdom from slipping into anarchy. The very night the messengers ~~xxxxx~~ entered the capital of Kekaya, Bharata saw a terrible dream. After it he felt very unhappy. Nothing seemed to appeal to him. His friends noticing his torment tried to beguile him but the foreboding of some coming evil would just not leave him. He told his friends of what he had seen. He had seen his father soiled and with unkempt hair falling from the top of a mountain into a pool of cowdung and while swimming in it drinking oil again and again. He then helped himself with sesame seeds and cooked rice, tilodana and with his body besmeared with oil ~~seen~~ bathe in oil. He next saw the ocean sucked dry and the moon fallen on the earth with the whole world engulfed in a sort of darkness. The next scene was that of a royal elephant with its tusk broken to pieces, the flaming fire suddenly extinguished, the earth cracked ~~up~~, the trees dried, the mountains in disarray and in

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smoke, the dark and brown ladies sitting on a dark iron stool and in dark attire hitting him. He further his father in red garments hurrying to the southern quarter in a chariot drawn by asses. A demon lady in red clothes with hideous looks was dragging him. She looked like laughing. With this dream Bharata was apprehending the death of any of the four : Daśaratha, Rāma, Lakṣmaṇa or ~~ka~~ himself.

evam etan mayā dṛṣṭam imāṃ rātriṃ bhayāvaham |

ahaṃ Rāmo 'thavā rājā Lakṣmaṇo vā mariṣyati

After the dream Bharata was just a bundle of nerves, with his throat drying up and his mind totally uneasy. Since he was quite unaware of the goings on in Ayodhyā, he could not make out as to what evil could befall anybody. But then the dream was precisely indicating that. He lost his lutre, his voice sank. Whatever other indications, he knew this much at least that "anybody seen to be in a dream going in a chariot drawn by asses has his smoke arising ~~out of the fire~~ a funeral pyre before long." The dream, therefore was indicative of the death of somebody. Bharata lost his equanimity. And it was in that state that he reached Ayodhyā. The dream seemed to prepare him for the harsh reality that he was to face some time later.

The other dream, as said earlier, is which Trijaṭā, one of the demoness ~~gu~~ guards of Sītā sees in the Aśoka Vāṭikā. After Rāvaṇa had failed to win over Sītā, the demoness guards threatened her with dire consequences for spurning his overtures. Their harsh words and threatening postures so unnerved her that she thought of ending her life. At that crucial moment an elderly demoness guard of the name of Trijaṭā gave a bit of her mind to her other companions and told them of the dream that she had seen the previous night. She had seen in it Rāma in white dress and with white garlands come with Lakṣmaṇa in a divine ivory palanquin drawn in the mid-air by a thousand horses and Sītā united with him like the light with the sun on a white mountain surrounded by a sea. Next scene in the dream was that of Rāma moving about with Lakṣmaṇa on a four-tusked mighty elephant. Both the brothers then came to Sītā in white dress and with white garlands. Sītā then climed up the front part of the aerial elephant which Rāma was riding. She, after that, jumped up and wiped with her hands the sun and the moon. The elephant carrying the two brothers and Sītā then came to position itself above Laṅkā in a chariot drawn by eight white bullocks. Trijaṭā had seen in the dream Rāma in the aerial car Puṣpaka ~~Rama~~ with his brother Lakṣmaṇa and wife Sītā. She had also Rāma devouring all the three worlds with ~~all~~ things, moving and unmoving. Next she had seen a white mountain come up in the midst of the milk ocean witha four-tusked mighty elephant on its top on whose back was seated Rāma with Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā.

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She had further seen Rāma with his face to the east having ceremonial bath with waters of all the holy places. All the gods bowed to him. He was accompanied with Sītā, in white dress and with white garlands. Rāma then assumed the form of Viṣṇu to whom all the gods, the Siddhas, the Gandharvas and Brahmarṣis, led by Brahmā, paid obeisance. Next to this she had seen him proceeding to the north in the company of Lakṣmaṇa and Sītā in the aerial car, the Puṣpaka.

This was with Rāma. With Rāvaṇa it was entirely different. She had seen him with shaven head, bathed in oil, in red dress, drinking oil, in a state of intoxication with a garland of the Karavīra flowers. He had slipped from the aerial car, the Puṣpaka, and in black dress was dragged by a woman. With red garlands and unguents he, drinking oil and laughing and dancing in confused mind, was proceeding to the southern quarter in a chariot drawn by an/ ass. He was seen next dropping down from the ass. He got up after that scared and uneasy, beside himself with intoxication, hurling abuses in a state of nudity. He had entered into a mire of filth, unbearable and of foul smell and got drowned in it. He then was seen proceeding to the southern quarter and entering into a mudless pond. A dark woman in red clothes with her limbs soiled with mud was dragging him to the southern quarter. Similarly she had seen Kumbhakarṇa and all the sons of Rāvaṇa with shaven heads and bathed in oil. Rāvaṇa had gone riding a boar, Indrajit a gandharva and Kumbhakarṇa a camel to the southern quarter. The next scene was that of Laṅkā with its broken Gopura and arches sinking into the ocean. All the demonesses of that city who had drunken oil and who were giving out loud laughter ~~and were~~ in a state of intoxication she had seen entering into a pool of cowdung along with Kumbhakarṇa and other prominent demons. All this seen in a dream, says, Trijaṭā, had convinced her that Rāma would recover Sītā and Rāvaṇa would meet his nemesis. She advised the demoness guards to desist from threatening Sītā and be at peace with her. The dream came as a great consolation for Sītā and made her resile from the extreme thought of ending her life under the psychological pressure put on her by the demoness guards. She was led to believe that all was not lost for her and that she could entertain hope of a bright future and that all her misery, all her trials and tribulations, were a temporary phenomenon which she could put up with fortitude for some time more.

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Since the Rāma story has been told by many writers, apart from Vālmīki and in many countries, it has come to assume varied forms and contours. A number of new incidents have come to be incorporated into it and the sequence of many of them changed. The dream sequence has also had its share of change.

Taking up the Rāmacaritamānasa of Tulasīdās we find that it too makes a reference to two dreams of which only one, the dream of Trijaṭā is common with Vālmīki. And the other one is entirely new. There is nothing of Bharata's dream there. Instead, there is mention of a dream of Sītā. As per the story there Bharata along with the Ayodhyā citizenry was proceeded to Pañcavaṭī to bring Rāma back. The night preceding the morning Bharata was nearing it, Sītā had dream which she recounted to Rāma. She had seen in it Bharata having come there (Citrkūṭa) with a mass of people who appeared to her to be sad, sorrowful and afflicted. She had also seen the mothers-in-law in an abnormal mood. On hearing of the dream Rāma's eyes were filled with tears and he told Lakṣmaṇa that the dream was not good and forebode listening to a bad news.

The dream of Trijaṭā in essentials is the same as in Vālmīki but lacks its detail and finesse. It is dismissed just in four couplets of which only two are devoted to its description. Trijaṭā sees in the dream a monkey burning Laṅkā and killing its entire demon army. She also sees shaven-headed naked Rāvaṇa with his scored of arms severed riding an ass. He is seen proceeding to the southern quarter in that state. Laṅkā seems to pass on to Vibhīṣaṇa. Rāma's name goes round the city and at his bidding Sītā is despatched to him. Trijaṭā tells the other demonesses who had been threatening Sītā that her dream is sure to come true and that too before long. On hearing this the demonesses got scared and fell at her feet.

Trijaṭā's dream also finds mention in the Rāmāyaṇa of Kamban, the only dream referred to by him. It has its peculiarity in the way it is introduced. Trijaṭā tells Sītā that she sees no dream; she is always thinking of Rāma while she (Trijaṭā) has seen one wherein she has seen Rāvaṇa on an ass being led to the southern quarter by a dark woman. The description is more or less the same as in Vālmīki though very much shorter, only a couple of stanzas being devoted to it.

The Assamese Rāmāyaṇa in both its parts, the part from Book two to six known as the Saṭkāṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa by Mādhava Kandalī and the part comprising Book one by Mādhavadeva has reference to dreams. In Book

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one, the Adi Kanda Kausalyā and the other queens of Daśaratha are said to have seen a dream before the birth of Rāma. They saw the Lord with conch, discus, mace and lotus appearing before them. The Lord's vehicle Garuḍa had wings of gold. The Lord was sitting on his (Garuḍa's) back like a massive cloud on the mount Meru and was illumining all the quarters. The yellow robe on His dark body shone like lightning on a dark cloud. The necklace round His neck and the golden cloth around His waist were covering His body with the brilliance of the full moon. His eyes were like blooming lotuses. The ornaments on His body shone like stars in the clear sky. His smile was a fountain of nectar. He was looking at the three queens with great joy.

In Book two by Mādhava Kandalī there is reference to the dream of Bharata which in its description is very similar to the description of Vālmīki. Bharata in his dream is said to have seen the moon falling from the firmament on the earth, the oceans being sucked dry by the evil Rahu, a mighty flash of lightning from a cloudless sky striking the earth and shattering it into innumerable pieces. Bharata saw his father wearing blood-soaked clothes. His whole body looked weak and he was being dragged towards the southern quarter by some unseen forces. He also saw his father's body submerged in a tank of oil.

Now coming to Rāmāyaṇas outside of India, we find that there is mention of one dream in the Thai Rāmākiṣkiṇḍa called the Ramakien. After ~~Ravana had~~ renovated Laṅkā subsequent to its burning by Hanumān, Rāvaṇa had a dream wherein he saw two hawks, one black and the other white, fighting. In the fight the white one killed the black one. After that he saw himself pouring oil in a coconut shell and putting a wick in it. As soon as he did that, a lady ~~[illegible]~~ from somewhere made ~~a sudden appearance there~~ and lighted the wick which gradually burnt the shell. The fire having consumed it, touched Rāvaṇa's hand which was holding it (the shell) and he got up in alarm. The next morning he asked his brother Vibhīṣaṇa who was well-versed in the science of dreams to interpret the dream to him. Vibhīṣaṇa told him that the dream was highly inauspicious. The two hawks, he explained, symbolized the two adversaries, the white one Rāma and the black one Rāvaṇa. The killing of the black one by the white one symbolized the death of Rāvaṇa at the hands of Rāma. The coconut shell symbolized the city of Laṅkā and the burning of the shell represented its destruction. The oil

in the shell symbolized his entire family which is sure to meet with annihilation. The woman lighting the wick was no other than their sister Śūrpaṇakhā, the root cause of all trouble. After interpreting the dream Vibhīṣaṇa advised Rāvaṇa to return Sītā to Rāma and secure thereby the safety of the Rākṣasa race.

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According to the Lao Tun Rāmāyaṇa [illegible] as depicted in the murals of Wat Ko Kay in Bang Pramang the old capital of Laos, Pallin (Vālin) is [illegible] to a ~~[illegible] to~~ a dream. Nang Khaisi, the mother of Suvahu and the maternal grandmother of Hanuman, when alone sees Bhrahman ~~[illegible] on the~~ in dream one night. The In coming to now that Khaisi is in love with him, ~~descends~~ from heaven and makes love to her which results in the birth of Pāli (Vālin). Incidentally, this motif of making love in dream is not unique to Laos. It is found in the Mahābhārata too where Uṣā, the daughter of the thousand-armed demong king Bāṇa sees a dream one night wherein she sees and makes love with an unknown young man who later on is found ~~out~~ to be ~~the~~ Aniruddha, the grandson of Kṛṣṇa. ~~[illegible] love to her resulting in the [illegible] of her virginity~~.

From what has been said above, it will be clear that the Rāmāyaṇa in its various versions in India and abroad has dreams of various kinds which play a very significant role in the unfoldment of the narrative. They provide inkling of the coming events, good or bad prepare the characters mentally to face them, were they to be bad as in the case of Bharata or restraining a character from taking a drastic step like ending one's life were they to be good as in the case of Sītā. They even result in the birth of an important character as in the case of Vālin in the Laotian Rāmāyaṇa. The dreams are there in the story not just to enhance interest in it, they have a definite ~~role~~ part to play ~~in it~~ which as the above analysis would prove is very significant.

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There is reference to dream in the context of the Rama story in the Mahābhārata too. Rāma is shown there to sleep on a bed of the Kuśa grass on the sea shore to propitiate the sea to make way for his monkey army. The sea appears before him in dream and advises him to ask a monkey of the name of Nala to build a causeway on the waters. Rāma follows the advice and asks Nala to proceed with the construction of the causeway which the latter dutifully carries out.

While referring to the Mahabharata in the context of the Rama story, it may not be out of point to have a look into it for other references to dreams. In the Vanaparvan of the said work there is a mention of a very interesting dream. As the Pandavas had stayed long in the Dvaitavana, a forest of that name, they must have slaughtered a large number of deer. It is said one night ~~a small number~~ the remaining one night/ ones appeared before Yudhisthira in dream and appealed to him to shift to some other ~~forest~~ place, lest they were to be completely wiped out. Yudhisthra taking pity on them told his brothers of the dream the next morning and moved over to the Kamyaka forest.

There is reference in the Mahabharata to a dream in the context of ~~the~~ Jayadratha, the brother-in-law of Duryodhana, withstanding the onslaught of the Pandava army. It is said that having suffered humiliation at the hands of Bhimasena, a Pandava's brother, while abducting Draupadi he practised severe penance to propitiate Lord Siva who ~~taki~~ taking pity on him appeared before him one night in dream and at his request granted him the boon that he all/ would be able to hold back the Pandava ~~army~~ brothers except Arjuna. It was because of this boon and the power of his divine weapons that he was able to hold back ~~the Pandava army~~ singlehandedly the Pandava army which was following Abhimanyu who had entered into the Kaurava forces after piercing through the cyclic formation, the Cakravyuha, which had ultimately led to his fall.

In the Santiparvan in answer to a query by Yudhisthira as to the attainment of which of the three Dharma, Artha and Kama is better that Bhisma recounts to him the episode of a Brahmin. It is said that the Brahmin gave himself over to Dharma with a worldly objective. He needed money for sacrifices and devoted himself to practising penance to obtain it. He saw near him a cloud of the name of

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Kundadhara, an attendant of the go s and thinking that he would be able to fulfil his desire worshipped him. His worship propitiated Kundadhara. Through his grace he (the Brahmin) saw in a dream one Manibhadra who was introducing the supplicants to gods who would then bestow on them riches and kingdoms. While this was on, Kundadhara prostrated before Manibhadra and told him that he had come to him with a request for the Brahmin. He told him that it was not money for him that he was approaching him. What he wanted for him was that he should engage himself in Dharma. Manibhadra told him that the gods wre pleased with him and the Brahmin and that he would surely be a Dharmatman devoted to Dharma. The Brahmin due having developed indifferen to worldly objects and the grace of the gods entered a forest and began to practice hard penance. After he had gone on with it for quite some time, he came to have the feeling that he should be in a position to offer wealth to whomsoever he would be pleased with and that he should not fail in his words. He then started the penance again. Second time he had the feeling that he should be in a position to offer kingdom to whomsoever he would be pleased with and that his words should not fail him. At this moment Kundadhara impelled by his penance and the feeling of friendship towards him appeared before him and showed him thousands of kings rotting in hell. He then also showed him the desire, the anger, the greed, the fear, the sleep, the lassitude and laziness which wre encircling the people. The gods were afraid of the human beings and all those, the desire, the anger, etc. put impediments at ~~xxxx

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spread the Kusa grass and started making offerings. Strangely enough, an arm pierced through the grass bed to receive the offerings which quite baffled him. The dead forefathers do not receive the offerings in person, argued he to himself. Ignoring the arm he continued with the time-honoured practice of placing the offerings on the grass. He had a dream later at the end of which the forefathers showed themselves up to him . Expressing their pleasure at his steadfastness to tradition, they advised him to offer gold in place of land or cows. This would cleanse them as also their ancestors. Gold is a great purifies. It purifies the ten preceding and the same number of succeeding generations of one who offers it. The dream ending there, Bhisma got up and turned his mind in making an offering of gold.

The last time a dream finds mention in the Mahabharata is in its last Book the Harivamsa. Usa, the demon king Bana , goes to a river bank. She notices there Lord Siva enjoying himself with his consort Parvati. Usa thought Parvati to be very lucky in enjoying pleasures of married life in the company of her husband. Parvati sensing her feeling told her that she too would have an enjoyment like this before long. This set Usa athinking. She now started waiting for the happy occasion. Haimavati, a nymph, who also happedned to be around, told her laughingly that the man who would make love to her in the twelfth night of the month of Vaisakha would be her husband. Things happened the way the nymph had described . Exactly on the twelfth night when Usa was asleep in her palace an exceptionally handsome man made love to her ij dream. She got up all aghast with her virginity gone Totally disconsolate she was at her wit's end.She had a friend in a nymph called Citralekha. S he called for her and placed before her predicament. She had absolutely no idea of the identity of the man who had made love to her. Everything had happened in dream. The resourceful Citralekha solved the problem for Usa by drawing the portraits of all the important men, divine, semi-divine and human who could be powerful and strong enough to make way to the apartment of Usa by breaking through the almost impregnable barriers to it in the capital city of Sonitasura of her thousand-armed father Bana. Well, she took good seven days for this onerous task. She showed all the portraits to

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to her. Among them she she could recognize the man who who had been united with her in dream in the night. He was Aniruddha, the son of Pradyumna and the grandson of Krsna. Citralekha used all her stratagems to bring him over ~~in~~ from his habitat in Dvaraka to to the palace of Usa in Sonitapura to unite him with Usa.

There is Rāma story in the Yogavāsiṣṭha rāmāyaṇa too the authorship of which tradition ascribes to ~~the same~~ Vālmīki ~~who had composed the well-known Rāmāyaṇa~~. It is a highly philosophical work of Advaita or monism in the form of long conversation between Rāma and his preceptor Vasiṣṭha who instructs the former in the ~~ephemeral~~ ephemeral nature of the universe which acccording to him is nothing but a lengthy dream. What does exist in reality is the omnipresent indefinable entity called cit or consciousness which assumes different forms and causes different notions. When one sees in dream a city it is ~~ki~~ one's own consciousness only that assumes the form of the city and if the dream city has the citizens, it is again his own consciousness that has assumed the form of the citizens. So long as a dream persists, everything appears to be real, one feels pleasure and pain, one laughs and cries in reaction to certain situations. The reaction could be very strange. One can even see one's own self dying, svapne svamaraṇam . If everything seen , heard and experienced in dream could be unreal, so can everything heard, seen and experienced in the world could be so until the realization of the self. In this strain goes Vasiṣṭha's long oration to Rāma.

Coming to later literature, we find dream referred to in the Svapnavāsavadatta of Bhasa, the earliest of the known Sanskrit playwrights, which has the word svapna, dream, in it. As the story goes, a king of the name of Udayana is falsely informed of the death of his wife Vāsavadattā in a fire accident in his absence in a village he had been camping in to facilitate his marriage for political reasons with the Magadha princess Padmāvatī. A minister of Udayana posing as a Brahmin and describing Vasavadatta as his sister places her (Vāsavadattā) under the custody of Padmāvatī before her marriage with Udayana. A few days after the marriage while Udayana is still with the in-laws, Padmavati falls ill. Udayana comes to enquire after her health does not find her in the cool chamber called the ocean house where a bed had been laid for her

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He waits for her on the bed and falls asleep after a while. The chamber being too cool for him he covers his head with a sheet. In the meantime comes there Vāsavadattā precisely for the same, the purpose of enquiring after the health of the princess. Mistaking the sleeping king for Padmāvatī she lies by her side to indicate her feeling of intimacy with her. The king happens to be seeing a dream at that time. "O Vāsavadattā", speaks aloud he in dream. Startled Vāsadattā who had been living incognito with Padmāvatī jumps up from the bed to save the stratagem of the minister but before going of the chamber feels it proper to place on the bed the arm of the king hanging from it. As soon as she has done so, she rushes out with the sleepy king awakened by her touch following her and hitting himself against a wall. Vāsavadattā is soon out of his reach leaving him confused and confounded, the thrill of the touch of her hand forcing him to believe that whatever he had experienced was a fact and not an illusion and that Vāsavadattā was still alive. The result of all this is that when Vāsavadattā finally appears before him, he does not take long to accept her actual existence. The dream and the subsequent touch had left a lurking suspician in his mind that Vāsavadattā was alive and not dead as it had been made out publicly.

From what has been said above it should be clear that in the Sanskrit literature, particularly in the two great epics, the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, dreams find a sizable reference and play an important role in the moulding of the events. They give (including) beforehand of the coming incidents, good or bad, providing comfort and discomfort as per the situation and show the path if there are difficulties to steer clear of them. They are a good study in themselves, at once interesting and illuminating.

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